

## Chapter 37

# Innovative Approaches to Traditional Mentoring Practices of Women in Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

*The chapter will present research specific to the mentoring needs of women in higher education, specifically females in early and mid-career as well as women pursuing senior faculty status and positions of leadership. The chapter will begin with a description and rationale of mentorship, specifically among female faculty, as well as an explanation of the traditional model of mentoring. The chapter will then lead into a discussion of both traditional and innovative methods of mentorship and evaluate the benefits of mentoring to the mentor. Throughout the chapter, mentorship relationships among female faculty are evaluated under the theoretical lens of relational cultural theory and social learning theory. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of future research and potential practice of mentoring female faculty in academia.*

### INTRODUCTION

As Vongalis-Macrow (2016) posited, “the comparatively low number of women in leadership positions suggests that women as leaders continue to remain outside of higher education leadership culture” (p. 90). To effectively change the higher education culture to one that supports and cultivates the leadership skills of women, mentorship programs geared specifically towards women in university administration are needed in growing rates. The following chapter will present research specific to the mentoring needs of women in higher education, including females in early and mid-career, as well as women pursuing

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8592-4.ch037

senior faculty status and positions of leadership. The chapter will begin with a description and rationale of mentorship, specifically among female faculty, as well as an explanation of the traditional model of mentoring. The chapter will then lead into a discussion of both traditional and innovative methods of mentorship and evaluate the benefits of mentoring to the mentor. Throughout the chapter, mentorship relationships among female faculty are evaluated under the theoretical lens of Relational Cultural Theory and Social Learning Theory. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of mentorship needs in higher education administration, future research, and potential practice of mentoring female faculty in academia.

## **DESCRIPTION OF MENTORSHIP**

Zeind, Zdanowicz, Macdonald, Parkhurt, King, and Wizwer (2005) defined mentoring as “a relationship in which an individual who is senior in terms of experience (mentor) undertakes the following roles with a less experience individual (protégé): advisor, teacher, protector, role model, advocate, counselor, and sponsor” (p. 1). In addition to purely professional and academic guidance, mentors often serve as a coach, guide, confidant, and even friend (Hinton, 2006). Waddell, Martin, Schwind, and Lapum (2016) described the goal of academic mentorship as a relationship that provides a supportive environment to advise and coach a faculty member within the context of the organization’s culture and expectations. Additionally, in higher education, mentors may offer their mentees with opportunities to collaborate with conducting research, publishing, and presenting at national conferences (Hinton, 2006).

Further, mentorship relationships provide faculty members professional networking circles as well as someone to assist in making career decisions (Holmes, Danley Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007). Moreover, mentorship supports the psychosocial needs of new faculty, especially faculty at smaller institutions who may not have an extended network of support (Angelique, Kyle, & Taylor, 2002). Research indicates that effective mentoring relationships focus on both personal and professional developments (Holmes, Danley Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007). Notably, research indicates that having a mentor is a significant component in successful career advancement and that the lack of a mentor relationship may hinder career progression and faculty advancement in higher education (Alvarez & Lazzari, 2016; Baig, Jabeen, Ansari, & Salman, 2015; Bertrand Jones & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Chandler, 1996; Gander, 2013; Waddell, Martin, Schwind, & Lapum, 2016; Zeind et al., 2005).

## **REASONS FOR MENTORSHIP**

Current literature clearly indicates the need for female faculty members to participate in mentoring relationships both on professional and personal levels due to the culture of academia (Alvarez & Lazzari, 2016; Baig, et al., 2015; Boerner, 2016; Gander, 2013; Hammer, Trepal, & Speedlin, 2013). Chesney-Lind, Okamoto, and Irwin (2006) explained the difficulty of working in isolation, which is often the environment that higher education faculty may face on a daily basis, due to differing work schedules and office hours from other colleagues as well as the tremendous influence of online teaching, which often takes place while a faculty member works remotely away from colleague interaction and support. A mentorship relationship can serve to bridge this barrier of isolation through creating fellowship, support, and guidance (Gibson, 2004).

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